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COUNTRY

China

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SUBJECT

Living Conditions

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT #

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1. "The Chinese are inborn actors, and for this reason a few typically Soviet-style 'spectacles' appeal to them. One of these few is group folk dancing in the streets of a busy city such as Tientsin. At present all Chinese city youngsters have to undergo special dance training. Thus they are prepared to perform at the Soviet and Chinese Communistic festivals and revolutionary anniversaries. Children love dressing-up, and it pleases them to be allowed to parade the streets wearing richly-embroidered national costumes, which they are otherwise prohibited from wearing, these being considered 'reminders of the obnoxious past.' As a matter of fact, Chinese city dwellers nowadays wear drab, blue cotton jackets and pants, regardless of season and weather. This is a sort of uniform that is usually issued by the government cooperative stores twice yearly. The numerous private shops which used to have a large variety of artistically embroidered silks are long ago closed.
2. "This blue standard clothing is out on exactly the same pattern for both sexes and is produced in but two sizes. As it frequently happens that at the time of distribution of clothing only one size is available, a good part of the population wears a wrong size, which makes this ridiculous uniform even more ugly than it otherwise could be. As there is no imported dyestuff, these clothes acquire a drab, faded appearance after a few washings.
3. "The traditional long braids of the Chinese youngsters are gone and instead there is a standard haircut. This makes them look as if a bowl had been placed on their heads and all the hair cut off round the bowl. This hair-do is topped off with a discolored blue cotton sports cap, worn, for some unknown reason, rakishly at the very back of the head. Involuntarily one remembers the graceful, slim Chinese girls in their elegantly-cut national garb, and regrets their disappearance.
4. "Radio broadcasts and street loudspeakers have become the greatest nuisance of the city population. They are stationed in all city squares, sports grounds, stadiums, public gardens and on roofs of numerous government and public buildings, and they operate from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. These broadcasts mostly start with 'devastating reports' but in fact

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it is clumsily fabricated 'information' on US activity, hostile to China. They then pass on to Soviet and Chinese Communistic achievements of the past year [1954], and terminate in endless so-called 'voluntary confessions' of political criminals and deviators. As a rule, these confessions are uttered in hysterically shrieking voices and create a ghastly atmosphere in the city streets. This is even more alarming for the Chinese people whose relatives and friends are very often among those 'confessing.'

5. "On a flimsy pretext, using the vague and undefined term 'subversive activity' many decent, innocent Chinese are condemned and executed. Great numbers are in jails and their families have no access to them. They are being tried by People's Tribunals. Since no new Law Codes are promulgated as yet, these trials are based on 'people's consciousness.' The term of punishment is dependent on the People's Judge, who varies the term according to his or her understanding of Communist ideology.
6. "Reports to the police are encouraged. Unscrupulous people abuse this opportunity and use it to settle purely personal grudges, representing these cases as political crimes. Confessions, arrests, searches and executions are a constant occurrence. Arbitrariness reigns. The most vivid imagination cannot conjure a greater contrast: on the one hand endless confessions transmitted daily by the loud speakers, accompanied by shrieks of repentance; on the other hand, a constant beating of Chinese leather drums and the rhythmic tapping of groups of dancers, practicing in the city streets.

- 25X1 7. [redacted] some wealthy Chinese merchants, accused by the Tribunals for some past misdeed, were being led across the city to the nearest execution grounds. One of these oft-repeated stands out more clearly than the others--
25X1 [redacted] tailor among the group of 'offenders.' This well-known, hard-working, elderly Chinese was burdened with a large family and was the only breadwinner. Being always preoccupied with his professional work, he had no time whatsoever for any kind of political activity.
25X1 [redacted] had been condemned on a false report by a former employee who had a personal grievance against the tailor. He had accused the tailor of 'subversive activity' and that was sufficient grounds for trial and condemnation.

8. "Extraordinary things happen in Red China when it becomes known that a delegate of some friendly power or some foreign trade union group or trade mission intends to visit the country. Many days ahead of this event all the streets along which the delegation will be taken are being renovated--new coats of paint for facades of buildings, new squares are hastily laid out and planted with shrubs and flowers from all the government nurseries, and tens of thousands of workmen repair the sidewalks and the roadbed. Signboards and posters inimic to the foreigners are speedily removed. New blue uniforms are issued to those trusted ones who will be granted special permits to throng these privileged streets and represent the 'happy crowd of welcoming Communists.' The best dancing teams practice day and night and get beautiful costumes for this special occasion. This hurried camouflage could be comic, were it not so sad. It reminds one of the methods of film-set construction prevalent in Hollywood.
9. "One of the brightest aspects of Red China is its persistent, earnest struggle to 'liquidate illiteracy' among the teeming masses. Students, teachers and intelligent Chinese from all walks of life are organized into 'teaching squads' and units. The Chinese population, including middle-aged people, are being daily assiduously taught in groups. Those who try to avoid this schooling are 'disciplined.' Elderly, old-regime Chinese ladies wobble on their tiny bound feet to the public squares and gardens where instruction begins from the very early morning hours. In a loud sing-song chorus they repeat separate parts of

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complicated Chinese characters, which they find extremely hard to memorize. However, this instruction is far from adequate at the moment, since no suitable textbooks are in existence. There is an important movement among the teachers and scholars to simplify the Chinese writing and new books are in process of compilation.

10. "Children received free schooling, which is being carefully watched and constantly improved. Were it not for the unsound basis of political propaganda on which all education is founded and the inculcating of enmity to all things US and English, this introduction of compulsory studying would be one of the most gratifying aspects of life in Red China."

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